



PRESS RELEASE

23 SEPTEMBER 2022: FIRST 'EUROPEAN ORGANIC DAY

Italy celebrates the success of organic farming: from niche agriculture to a tool at the centre of EU agri-food policies

Bologna, 23 September 2022 - Organic agriculture finally has a dedicated European day, to be celebrated every year on 23 September. Promoted by IFOAM OE, it has been set up by the European Commission to celebrate the sector, raise awareness of the characteristics and benefits of organic farming, and to assess the progress of the agro-ecological transition towards the goal of reaching 25 per cent of the area under organic cultivation by 2030.

The date is no coincidence, as Janusz Wojciechowski, EU Commissioner for Agriculture, explained, 23 September was chosen because it coincides with the autumnal equinox, the time when day and night are approximately the same length, thus reminding us of the balance that is essential when working with nature.

Italy joined the European celebrations for this important anniversary with the organisation of an event promoted by FederBio and the Municipality of Bologna in collaboration with AssoBio, national and local institutions, Nomisma and BolognaFiere. This initiative is part of the Being Organic in EU project promoted by FederBio in collaboration with Naturland and co-financed by the European Union pursuant to EU Reg. n.1144/2014.



The Organic Day, part of the initiatives of the EU Action Plan on Organic Food, is an opportunity to take stock of the agro-ecological transition, the actions to be taken to stimulate the sector and to raise awareness of more careful and sustainable food choices.

The organic associations present at the Bologna event also wanted to respond to the appeal of *Fridays For Future*, which, with the global climate mobilisation called for today, Friday 23 September, demanded that the climate crisis be central to the next political deadlines and prioritised in the public debate.

The organic associations endorse this appeal and again highlight how the organic method, which relies on the recycling of organic matter as protection and increase of soil fertility, is able to retain large amounts of water and increase the carbon content. In this way, it can become an important potential for combating and mitigating climate change.

Several initiatives were presented during the first *EU Organic Day*, including the return of 'La Festa del Bio', organised by FederBio, which will stop in Bologna, Milan and Rome. This is an event open to all, which aims to communicate the values of true organic and explain the advantages of a more ethical, healthy and sustainable lifestyle through informative talks alternating with moments of entertainment.

In an ever-changing economic context, strongly conditioned by food, energy and climate emergencies, the picture of organic farming is nevertheless positive. Italy is confirmed as one of the leading countries in the EU in terms of the share of organic UAA cultivated on the total (17.4%), the number of operators 86,144, an increase of 5.4% compared to 2021, and exports (3.4 billion euros in 2022, +16% compared to 2021).



The point of attention on which the associations discussed was the stagnation of domestic consumption, which must be relaunched in line with the renewed need to increase production and to keep organic supply and demand in balance.

Nomisma's monitoring of organic consumption confirms a slight slowdown in domestic consumption (EUR 3.9 billion, -0.8% in value compared to 2021), in contrast to a strong jump in out-of-home consumption (+53%), which is establishing itself as a growth driver for the entire sector.

The widespread presence of organic produce is the real strength of the category (organic is present on the tables of 23 million Italians) but per capita expenditure in Italy is still low (EUR 64 per year), especially when compared to Germany (EUR 180), France (EUR 188) and Denmark (EUR 383).

"The European Organic Day is an important moment to celebrate the sector, which in 30 years has gone from being a niche element to an engine for the relaunch of the entire agri-food sector, at the heart of European green policies. The latest disasters that have hit our country in recent days remind us that we are running out of time. What is needed is the adoption of a new paradigm of agrifood production based on the agroecological transition, which will effectively counter climate drift while protecting biodiversity, the environment and soil fertility. We therefore join the call of Fridays for Future and ecologists for farmers to join their climate fight. Organic farming is a concrete answer to meet future challenges because it ensures resilience and sustainability, helping to mitigate climate change. But that's not all, organically farmed land tends to retain more water, becoming a form of protection in case of droughts and floods," stressed **Maria Grazia Mammuccini, FederBio President.**



"The 'EU Organic Day' reminds us that the massive expansion of organic farming is not just a German goal, but a European one. And we want to promote this common goal with a joint campaign across borders. Because organic farming is the most effective way to counteract the extinction of species and climate change and at the same time to secure the future of our food supply," says **Naturland President Hubert Heigl**.

"On this important day we are celebrating organic Italy: a country of good producers (with 17% of the land, compared to the EU average of 9%), good exporters (+16%), first in the world on a par with the United States, but we can improve from the point of view of consumption, which has grown by only +5% with a good push in the out-of-home sector. Training, communication and research will be at the centre of our actions to foster the development of the sector. It is precisely on this occasion that we have the pleasure of launching 'Organic Week', which will take place in the spring and will involve all the large-scale and specialised distribution chains, together with the catering world. In line with this, we hope that a traceability platform validated by the Ministry of Agriculture will be created as soon as possible so that the path of organic products from the field to the table is transparent, also to the consumer. Emergencies and war cannot be an excuse to take resounding steps backwards and distance ourselves from the virtuous path we have built up to now," says **AssoBio President Roberto Zanoni**.

"Organic food is fully within the food policies of the Municipality of Bologna, starting with school canteens, on which we have been working for some time, and moving on to farmers' markets and the promotion of proximity agriculture, which must be increasingly oriented towards organic production. We also intend to join the Bologna Apennine Organic District," emphasised **Daniele Ara, Councillor for Schools, Agriculture and Water Networks of the Municipality of Bologna**. "To know the



health benefits, to understand the environmental and social sustainability contribution of organic food, or to understand in a simple and concrete way the differences with conventional food; these are the three areas on which consumers are asking for more information and clarification. School is also the ideal place to lay the foundations for proper nutrition education: Nomisma surveys indicate that 80% of parents consider school learning mechanisms in the area of nutrition to be decisive," **Silvia Zucconi, Head of Market Intelligence & Consumer Insight Nomisma.**

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BEING ORGANIC in EU

Choose the European Organic Leaf for a better world.

"BEING ORGANIC in EU" project is a promotion campaign proposed by FederBio in collaboration with Naturland and co-financed by the European Union according to the EU regulation n.1144/2014. It foresees an articulated set of actions with the aim of improving the knowledge, prestige and consumption of organic products towards the two target countries: Italy and Germany. "BEING ORGANIC in EU" aims to contribute to a sustainable agri-food system in support of the "European Green Deal" and of the "Farm to Fork" and "Biodiversity 2030" strategies to foster an ethical, healthy, climate and ecologically resilient food system and to highlight the virtuous characteristics of European organic agriculture, both in terms of product quality and sustainability, from primary production to the consumer. For these reasons, the initiatives implemented by the project are fully in line with the objectives of the 'European Green Deal' and its strategies and functional to the realisation of the 'European Action Plan for the Development of Organic Agriculture'.



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